



STATE OF IDAHO
COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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TRANSMITTAL # 5

MEMORANDUM

June 20, 2002

TO: Workforce Development Council

FROM: Michael Graham, Administrator

SUBJECT: ICBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Plan Modification

ACTION REQUESTED: Request Review And Comment On The Attached Plan

BACKGROUND:

Enclosed is a letter to the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, requesting approval for modifications to the State Plan for Title I of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and Title VI B of the Supported Employment Section of the Rehab Act described in the attachments accompanying that letter.

The Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired is requesting your review and comment on the attached plan modifications.

Contact: Michael Graham (208) 334-3220

Attachments

Board Members

Dave Hand
Chairman

Kelly Pearce
Vice Chair

Dianne Milhollin
Commissioner
Equal Opportunity Employer

David Ryan
Commissioner

Elsie Lamp
Commissioner

May 31, 2002

Carleen Anderson & Gilbert A Doc≡ Williams
U.S. Department of Education
Rehabilitation Services Administration
915 Second Avenue Room 2848
Seattle, WA 98174-1099

Dear Carleen,

Enclosed is the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICBVI) submission of the attachments applicable to the State Plan for Title I of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and Title VI B of the Supported Employment Section of the Rehab Act. The following attachments to the State Plan are enclosed and we hope will be found approvable by your office. They are effective October 1, 2002 and we are requesting your approval for the subsequent federal year.

Attachment 4.11(b)	-	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
Attachment 4.12(b)	-	Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Cost of Services
Attachment 4.12(c)(3)	-	Goals and Plans for the Distribution of Title VI B Funds
Attachment 4.12(e)	-	Evaluation and Report of Progress and Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

As you know the State of Idaho does not have a clearinghouse or state review process as per Executive Order #12372.

If in your review of this material you find any corrections or omissions, please don=t hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

Michael Graham, Administrator

MB:nw
Cc: Cheryl Brush
Attachments

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COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Personnel Data Systems

ICBVI employs the following tools to collect and analyze the needs of qualified rehabilitation personnel and to make plans for personnel development:

Job Descriptions

The Idaho Division of Human Resources maintains job descriptions for all service providing personnel. This includes job descriptions for:

- Administrative Assistant I (Rehab Secretary)
- Office Services Supervisor I
- Storekeeper
- Client Services Aide
- Instructor Specialist
- Senior Rehabilitation Teacher for the Blind
- Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind
- Senior Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind
- Other related personnel include:
 - Radio Reading Services Coordinator
 - Assessment and Training Center Supervisor

We have upgraded the knowledge, skills, and abilities of Senior Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind to reflect a requirement that the position require CRC credentials or the capacity to sit for CRC exam immediately following hire.

We would then utilize Counselor for the Blind only as under fill when we were unable to recruit for Senior Counselor for the Blind. As an under fill position, Counselor for the Blind would not be given the responsibility for determining eligibility or ineligibility, IPE approval, case closure, or issues regarding the severity of disability as it relates to order of selection. Of the six individuals who are in a counseling capacity for ICBVI, four are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, one has entered into a plan of training towards a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling, and one has chosen a demotion to Counselor for the Blind.

We have 11 ½ Instructor Specialists, only four of whom have a degree recognized by the American Association of Educators and Rehabilitators for the Blind. One additional Instructor Specialist is presently enrolled in a Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching Programs. This activity is paid for, predominately, through the In-Service Training Grant, supplemented by stipends at the universities.

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Employee Educational Profiles

ICBVI maintains employee educational profiles, which compares their pre-hire and post-hire training and educational experience with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required on their job description. Presently this does not cross-reference to any national standards. The exception to this would be rehabilitation counselors. The knowledge, skills, and abilities listed on the Rehabilitation Counselors' educational profile directly correspond to the core competencies required by the Center for Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. Core competencies required by AER in the job descriptions and announcements produced for ICBVI in recruiting Instructor Specialists are encouraged for extra credit.

Training Needs

Annually, we survey all staff to identify training needs. The needs identified are then addressed by one of three means:

- X Individual training plans;
- X Specialized group trainings, such as Instructor Specialist, Rehabilitation Counselor training; or
- X These needs can be addressed at the all-staff in-service, which is conducted annually.

Among the individual training plans we have been careful in the last three years to ensure that when counselors wishing to maintain their CRC, that our training is CRC approved and they can obtain continuing education credit.

Anticipated Recruitment Needs

Over the next five years we anticipate the need for one-to-two additional Rehabilitation Counselors, due to attrition and retirement. We also anticipate one-to-three Instructor Specialists will be needed.

In terms of Rehabilitation Counselors, there are approximately thirty-four graduates from universities in the Northwest. This includes, but is not limited to, approximately six from University of Idaho, ten from Western Oregon University, four from Portland State University, four from Western Washington University, and ten from University of Utah.

ICBVI's recruitment through these institutions has been challenged by the keen competition from other recruiting entities also facing the same personnel shortages and requirements. In Region X there is not a single rehabilitation teacher-training program. If the minimum requirements for Instructor Specialists were to increase without an increase in the number of graduates and no development of a rehabilitation teaching school in the Northwest, it is very conceivable that we would not be able to fill our Instructor Specialist positions.

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Recruitment and Retention

The Chief of Rehabilitation Services, who is also the HRD officer serves on the Advisory Council to the Regional Center for Continuing Education and the Advisory Council for the University of Idaho=s Graduate Studies in Guidance and Counseling. This has allowed ICBVI to communicate its recruitment needs and have input into the preparation and curriculum development for local programs in higher education related to rehabilitation counseling.

Recently, we have also increased our staff=s participation in the Intermountain Chapter of the American Association of Educators and Rehabilitator of the Blind and Visually Impaired. Our recruitment efforts in the coming years for the rehabilitation teaching ranks will predominantly be successful based upon the networking that occurs through this professional organization since there are no rehabilitation teaching training programs in our region.

The Idaho Division of Human Resource=s announcement of vacancies over the Internet has also been somewhat helpful in broadening the net of recruitment for both rehabilitation teaching and rehabilitation counseling.

ICBVI has a long history of recruiting individuals from minorities and individuals with disabilities. Presently, we employ 11 individuals who are legally blind or totally blind, one deaf/blind, one individual from a minority background, and six individuals who have other disabilities for a total of 19 individuals. With a total staff of approximately 41 F.T.E.=s, this amounts to 46% of ICBVI=s staff either from a minority background or with the presence of a disability.

Personnel Standards

As previously stated, among our seven counseling staff, five currently meet the CRC requirements. One is enrolled in an approved program of training to pursue a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling and the other has chosen a demotion to a counseling position, which will not perform the tasks RSA has listed for qualified rehabilitation personnel.

As this relates to new personnel, ICBVI will ensure that the minimum qualifications for Senior Rehabilitation Counselor match the national standards. If, in the coming 24 months, recruitment is as difficult, then additional discussions will occur with the Division of Human Resources related to factors that may inhibit our ability to hire qualified staff, such as recruitment, low pay, etc.

In terms of assessing an individual employee=s pursuit of the CSPD standard for rehabilitation counseling we have established a minimum threshold of twelve credits a year as satisfactory progress. ICBVI=s commitment of funds toward this is that the agency will pay for 100% of tuition and fees and 50% of books at the undergraduate level and 100%

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fees and books at the graduate level. Transportation, related expenses, and time thus far will be worked out on a case-by-case basis. Each individual, at the time of his or her performance appraisal, has the opportunity to complete an employee development plan. It would be at that time that the supervisor would appraise how successfully the individual was completing their educational plan. If unforeseen circumstances do not allow an individual to complete 12 credits a year, this could be acceptable. This would depend upon the workload or accommodations related to their disability. Time and geography may also play a factor.

Staff Development

This is predominately the arena of our in-service training activities. A recent all-staff in-service had presentations on 911 data changes, computerized Career Information, diabetes, teaching alternative techniques of blindness, vision screening, informed choice has particularly been a subject when it comes to participation in our Assessment and Training Center. Substantial staff time in conference calls and meetings has been dedicated to a discussion of how we individualize training designed to meet the unique needs of each individual. Another area of training related to informed choice has had to do with the development of self-employment plans. Due to Idaho=s rural nature, self-employment very often has come up as the most logical and effective means of employment. However, developing parameters to assist our clients in making the most informed choice about successful business opportunities is not only a frequent conversation for staff meetings, but has also been the subject of in-service training sessions.

ICBVI=s previous in-services have addressed cultural diversity, both in terms of Native American culture, as well as Hispanic culture. We have also been able to send staff to the Migrant Agricultural Worker Conference in Seattle in 1998 and the Native American Conference in 1997, 1998, and 1999. Spring 2001, administrative and regional personnel participated in a joint meeting with 121 Projects in Idaho to understand better how we can coordinate services.

Individual Communication Needs

Due to ICBVI=s size, we have chosen to purchase signing services for individuals who are deaf or who use other modes of communication. Very often in deaf-blind cases, ICBVI will share a case with the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in an effort to provide an individual with the most comprehensive services.

Performance Evaluations System

Formal performance appraisals are conducted annually, however, each supervisor conducts periodic progress reviews. We conduct annual supervisory reviews for counselors to reinforce best practices and correct outdated ones. In August, 2002 all of ICBVI=s Counselors will participate in an RSA case review. It is our belief this will be a helpful discussion of best

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practices particularly related to facilitating clients in a process of making informed decisions in their rehabilitation plans. At the time of the performance appraisal service providing personnel often identify objectives and educational/training goals for the coming performance year. In one region of the state these training and performance objectives are developed as a team as regional goals and objectives. If this proves successful in this region we may try to replicate that pattern of self-directed work teams in other regions of the state.

Coordination of the CSPD

The closer affiliation of ICBVI with the American Association of Educators and Rehabilitators for the Blind (AER) naturally leads to a closer affiliation with the CSPD needs of the Dept. of Education and Special Education. In addition to the professional association provided through AER and its Intermountain Chapter, ICBVI meets regularly with representatives of Special Education and the administrator for the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind (see Attachment 4.9(c)(2)). This is an effort, not only to coordinate the delivery of services, but also in the hope that in the year ahead we will be able to co-sponsor training activities of mutual benefit to both agencies. (Related topic sees 4.12(e)≡Educational Task Force.≡)

During the spring of 2002 ICBVI hopes to share training calendars with the Oregon Commission for the Blind and the Washington Services for the Blind. Additionally, these agencies, as well as a Representative from the Alaskan agency, hope to see the distinct training needs of blind Vocational Rehabilitation agencies reflected in the new five-year RCEP Grant. This group is also meeting to discuss mutual training needs and the possibility of future mutual training activities of benefit to specific staff.

Review of the Plan by the Commission Board

CSPD issues have been the subject of ongoing discussions with the Commission Board. All the issues described in this attachment have been discussed with the Board.

The comments to date have focused on concerns regarding the impact CSPD may have in slowing the delivery of client services. As existing staff is absent in order to participate in education and as recruitment efforts require some positions to remain unfilled longer than usual, how will services continue to be delivered? ICBVI, as well as the employee have a responsibility to CSPD.

As such, each individual in pursuit of a relevant skill or accreditation will be granted some time at work to pursue this objective, and will be expected to invest some of their own time in these activities. Our mission is to improve services not at the expense of either clients or employees.

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Other Training Topics

All of the ICBVI counseling staff has participated in training regarding the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act and the Workforce Investment Act. Past subjects have also included learning disabilities, functional vision assessment, ethics, grief and loss, lighting, and team building. Presently all counselors are engaged in Workforce Investment at the local level. Our counselors are providing training to One-Stop partners on ICBVI services and are also receiving training regarding One-Stop and Workforce Investment through the local WIA Boards.

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4.12(b) Annual Estimates of Individuals to be served and Costs of Services

Idaho's population in 2000 was 1,293,000. If we eliminate from this population individuals age 65 and older who comprise 12.1 % and estimate the blind/visually impaired population to be 4% that would leave a potential number of eligible Idahoans for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at 45,461. The number of individuals who received services under Title I and Title VI this past year was 434. The average cost for authorizing services to those individuals who are eligible was \$ 981 per year.

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4.12(c)(3) Goals and Plans for Distribution of the Title VI, Part B Funds

The Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired receives 1% of the VI Part B funds to Idaho (approximately \$3,000.00). Depending on the cases identified, it is likely this would serve anywhere from one to four individuals. Evaluation of vocational potential and preliminary diagnostic studies of these individuals will be carried out under the Title I Program. Only at the point that a supplementary evaluation is determined appropriate, will Title VI Part B funds be authorized. Should the evaluation indicate the individual is appropriate and in need of ongoing intervention to sustain acceptable work performance, supported employment will be included in the plan development with the third part provider, at that point, signing onto their IPE. As a routine part of our community outreach, each counselor in every region is expected to contact the intermediate care facilities of the mentally retarded, community rehabilitation programs, private rehabilitation providers, community rehabilitation hospitals, and any other service provider unique to their area which they believe may be serving individuals who are eligible for supported employment.

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EVALUATION AND REPORT OF PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING IDENTIFIED GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND USE OF TITLE I FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES

The following are innovative services presently being undertaken. They are not exclusively funded by Title I.

Due to the population and geographic nature of Idaho there are two basic models of service delivery. One is urban and the other is rural. One-third of the state's population is within 50 miles of the Capital, Boise and the remainder of the state is predominantly rural. We, therefore, have attempted to strengthen both of these models by first, strengthening and increasing the utilization of our Assessment and Training Center (ATC) and second, increasing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of rural staff. In the area of adaptive technology and low-vision training it is often more expedient to receive intensive residential instruction in these adaptive skills through our ATC Center in Boise. However, often this is not practical or feasible for our rural clients. It is therefore, essential that regional staff have the capacity to bring clients to a basic competency in these areas, either through local resources or through their own knowledge, skills, and abilities. For regional staffs the activities we have engaged in to develop their abilities include training, as well as an expansion of the aids and appliances each regional office carries. This includes the demonstration of low-vision devices and the utilization of a mobile low-vision kit to assess people's capacity to use various forms of magnification. ICBVI is also in the process of investigating the possibility of a mobile Low Vision Clinic, which would allow some of those expertise contained in the Low Vision Clinic in Boise to visit various rural parts of the state.

Low Vision: Many of the things described in the previous paragraph have become an emphasis for various personnel and specialists in the Boise ATC. We have established a Low Vision Clinic in Boise with a local optometrist providing low-vision evaluations one day a week. Regional staff frequently finds no ophthalmologic or optometric resource in their region to perform low-vision evaluations and refer clients to this clinic not only for a tour of the Assessment and Training Center, but also for a low vision evaluation. Ensuring that a client is provided with the appropriate low vision device is only half of the issue; the second half is training staff to integrate the use of low vision into their teaching methodologies. This includes assisting the client to determine whether a visual or nonvisual method is the most appropriate for the particular need. Four instructors are also helping with the Low Vision Clinic on a part-time basis. Their role is to work in conjunction with our optometrist helping clients identify and successfully utilize low vision aids. Our optometrist does this following the low-vision evaluation. In 1999 and 2000 we had three major training events, each multi-day in nature, all of which had substantial emphasis on low-vision. This will continue in the years ahead.

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Regionalization of the Assessment and Training Center: We have made efforts in the Treasure Valley to make our ATC available for group instruction in local sights. For several reasons group instruction are often times the most feasible and effective means of distributing information to Independent Living and Vocational Rehabilitation clients. We expect that in the year ahead we will be continuing these group instruction efforts throughout southern Idaho.

Support Groups: ICBVI through our Older Blind Grant has established 30 support groups throughout the state. The encouragement that these groups offer to the participants is extremely valuable. Another bi-product is the natural exchange of ideas and information support groups has. This assists and compliments the work of our Instructor Specialists. The exchange of ideas not only increases the participant's options, but also provides an atmosphere, which encourages independence.

Case Management Responsibilities: We continue to believe in the power of specialization and, in that regard, we are focusing our Rehabilitation Counselor=s energies exclusively on the case management responsibilities of Vocational Rehabilitation. Our Independent Living cases are now being managed by the Instructor Specialists in each region and our State Only cases, as has been the practice for the last several years, continue to be managed by Administrative Assistants in each region. This necessitates a substantial amount of communication to ensure that the client is signed up for the appropriate program. Also this necessitated training our Instructor Specialists in the area of documentation and case management.

WIA: Our regional counselors serve on the local Workforce Investment Boards. As such they have an increased opportunity to network with local WIA partners and the resources all those partners bring to the workforce system. A significant amount of staff time continues to be dedicated to the discussion about how the Workforce System can better serve the needs of ICBVI clients, and also how ICBVI can assist other workforce partners to recognize visually impaired people that they are already serving.

SILC Support: Again this year ICBVI has dedicated \$55,000 of Title I funding to the State Independent Living Council (SILC). While it is to be expected that the activities of the Council would be cross disability in nature, ICBVI has asked the Council in the coming year to make every effort to identify specifically those individuals served through these funds. The most common area of concern for all disabilities is that of transportation. This is identified both in general surveys and in surveys of our clients in the visually impaired community. It would be our hope to have specific data of blind and visually impaired individuals who have benefited from SILC activities. Other activities we have a strong appreciation for are the education our consumers have received

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regarding self-advocacy. Also, in every community where there has been a strong center for Independent Living the advocacy of that center has had a substantial impact, we believe, in empowering our clients to obtain meaningful employment through housing, transportation, and encouraging our clients to maintain their own independence.

Transportation Initiative: This year we participated in a \$10,000 initiative to expand the Taxi Script Program in the Idaho Falls and Pocatello area. This was accomplished through the Center for Independent Living (LIFE), which operates in eastern Idaho.

Braille Transcription: ICBVI is working with the local private correctional facility population to develop a core group of Braille transcribers. We anticipate this will be somewhere between three and six individuals. We have assisted in the purchase of software, a scanner, four computers, two Braillewriters, and provided the technical support to establish this core group of individuals. From this, we hope to expand our Braille production in the Treasure Valley area.

Educational Task Force: Over the past 16 months several ICBVI staff has participated in a joint effort with the Department of Special Education and the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind. This group has also involved the National Federation of the Blind and Parents of Blind/Visually Impaired Children. The effort was to examine the quality and quantity of instruction that blind/visually impaired children receive in K- 12 grade. It didn't take long for the Task Force to clearly conclude that the number of hours of instruction that students receive from specialists in the field of blindness was inadequate. Subsequent to this, the Task Force submitted and reviewed a five-year grant from Stephen F. Austin University. This is a distance education grant in which Idaho and several other states will have participants complete a Master=s program to become Vision Specialists. We believe that increasing the number of Certified Vision Specialists in Idaho will subsequently result in an increase in the number of hires by school districts and the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind.

Computers: Computers become so rapidly outdated that ICBVI has recently learned of organizations that are willing to donate slightly dated computers (Pentium I=s) to ICBVI for distribution to our clients. Recently we obtained approximately 50 military computers and have distributed these to clients. Some of these were in the context of rehabilitation plans; others were outside of the context of a rehabilitation plan either in an Independent Living or sometimes a State Only plan. These were somewhat of a windfall to ICBVI. We anticipate there will probably be more computers in the future from other corporations. These are provided to clients in nontraditional situations, that is, situations where ICBVI would not normally find itself justifying the purchase of a computer. For example, we cannot justify the use of a computer for every individual who functions as a homemaker since there are very often other alternative techniques that suffice. However, often times it is helpful, and although it is not essential to the vocational goal it is very helpful to have such equipment. Judging by the rate of obsolescence in this field we suspect this will be an ongoing pattern.

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